Hill Ethics Unit Blocks Lobbying Disclosure Bill

By Mary Russell
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The House ethics committee yesterday continued to block a lobbying disclosure bill.

The bill, which greatly strengthens regulation of lobbying and lobbyists, has passed the Senate and been approved in a different form by the House Judiciary Committee.

The ethics committee, which also has jurisdiction over it, yesterday refused, 6 to 5, to tell the Rules Committee it has no objection to the measure being sent to the floor.

However, Judiciary Commitee chairman Rep. Peter W. Rodino Jr. (D-N.J.) has asked the Rules Committee to clear the bill for the floor, and indications were the Rules Committee might do so later this week despite the ethics committee's objection.

In addition, Rep. Norman Y. Mineta (D-Calif.) was circulating a letter yesterday calling on Speaker Carl Albert to ask the Rules Committee to clear the bill.

The bill must be cleared quickly if the House is to act and House-Senate differences are to be worked out before the scheduled Oct. 2 congressional adjournment.

Rep. Thomas S. Foley (D-Wash.) proposed that ethics continue to work on the bill but at the same time allow the Rules Committee to clear it for the floor so long as the Rules Committee would insure ethics part of the debate time and priority for the committee's amendments.

But ethics chairman John J. Flynt Jr. (D-Ga.), who voted against the motion, said he would "not want the adoption of the motion to indicate a lack of interest or abdication of jurisdiction."

Rep. Donald J. Mitchell (R-N.Y.) said he would hate to see ethics kill the lobbying bill and if we don't get out it will be characterized that way."

"If we become the source of objection, if we don't expedite consideration, we are much more likely to lose our jurisdication," Rep. Charles E. Bennett (D-Fla.) said.

The ethics committee has been criticized for its lack of enthusiasm in investigating payroll and sex scandals involving members of the House.

The lobbying bill would make the first changes in 30 years in the lobbying act, which now permits many lobbyists to escape registration and has no enforcement machinery.

As approved by the House Judiciary Committee, the bill would define a lobbyist as any organization that spends $1,250 per quarter on lobbying or employs a person who spends at least 20 per cent of his time lobbying. Lobbyist organizations would have to register annually and file quarterly reports describing their activities and naming individual lobbyists. The General Accounting Office, congress watchdog agency, would police the law.

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Report Wasn't 'Secret,' Schorr Lawyer Argues

CBS reporter Daniel Schoor cannot be forced to name his source for a House intelligence committee report because at the time he got it the House had not barred its publication, Schorr's attorney said yesterday.

Joseph A. Califano Jr. outlined Schorr's defense against a possible contempt-of-Congress citation in documents furnished the House ethics committee.

Included in them was an analysis of the final report of the Select Committee on Intelligence published by The Village Voice, a New York weekly newspaper, from Schorr's copy of the report. The analysis showed which parts of the report came from the committee's public hearing or had been printed previously by The New York Times or The Washington Post or aired by CBS News.